

The Strategic Importance of Automotive Parts to Poland

1. Rapid transport of troops and supplies across Poland and within it is crucial to any possible military effort the Soviets might launch against Western Europe.

2. There is evidence that the Poles have been having serious difficulty meeting their traffic goals and even greater trouble achieving even a small fraction of their plans for production of vehicles. The potential burden of military operations on motor transport is heightened by the inadequacy of the Polish railway net and the poor condition of most Polish railway equipment. Their failure to meet peacetime motor traffic goals suggests that motor transport might be a serious limitation on military mobility in the event of hostilities.

3. It is estimated that something like two-thirds of the present Polish inventory of trucks consists of about 20,000 American-built vehicles supplied by UNRRA immediately after the war. Many other American vehicles are, of course, in service in other parts of the orbit.

4. A substantial fraction of these 20,000 UNRRA trucks are believed to be immobilized and the efficiency of most of the balance seriously reduced because of a lack of spare parts obtainable only in the United States or Canada. Because of the great variety of parts involved, international differences in measurement, screw threads, specifications and the like, and the lack of familiarity with American practice in the orbit the production of the necessary parts by other than the manufacturers of the original vehicle would be difficult or impossible.

5. The proposed shipment of \$1,312,000 worth of spare parts to Denmark for transshipment to Poland would thus reactivate many millions of dollars worth of light trucks and automobiles which could not otherwise be provided without a vastly greater expenditure of money and resources. The Defense Department has estimated that, based on American experience, \$150,000 worth of parts might place in condition something on the order of 1,600 vehicles, or more than enough to completely motorize an infantry division. Whereas part of the proposed shipments are to equip passenger vehicles, an analysis by General Motors of a partial order for \$210,000 worth indicates that two-thirds of this order would be useable on light trucks. Thus it is reasonable to suppose that the total shipment involved in this proposal might make possible the complete motorization of several Polish divisions.

6. Accordingly, it is the view of CIA that the strategic importance of this particular proposed shipment is much greater than would be suggested either by the present security rating of such parts or by their money value.